United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1179
9 July 1992

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General deplores series of incidents in recent days affecting safety of United Nations humanitarian personnel in Iraq, latest of which resulting in injuries to two Australian members of United Nations Guard Contingent.

+ Secretary-General will initiate full investigation of reports alleging illicit use of United Nations aircraft for transport of money and military equipment to one of the factions in Somalia.

+ In letter to Secretary-General, Foreign Minister of South Africa welcomes proposal to send United Nations goodwill mission to that country; United Nations spokesman says proposal has not yet been confirmed.

+ Lord Carrington, Chairman of European Conference on Yugoslavia, proposes to send letters to three parties to conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina urging them to restart negotiations.

+ Secretary-General expresses hope that Economic and Social Council will become "Council of the twenty-first century", in address at the conclusion of high-level segment of current session.

+ Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs announces plans for updated appeal for Horn of Africa; World Food Programme steps up its relief efforts in southern Africa.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said today in a statement that he considered recent attacks against United Nations relief personnel assigned to Iraq under the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Programme "totally unacceptable". The statement follows an incident in which two Austrian members of the United Nations Guards Contingent were injured.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

The Secretary-General demanded that such incidents cease forthwith and said he expected the full cooperation of Government authorities in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of United Nations personnel.

* * *

Reports reaching the Secretary-General from Mogadishu today alleged that an aircraft previously chartered by the United Nations was subsequently used for the illicit transport of money and military equipment intended for delivery to one of the factions in the Somali capital.

In a statement today, the Secretary-General noted that the aircraft was said to be still carrying the insignia of the United Nations while engaged in the activity mentioned above. He announced that he was taking steps for a full investigation of this incident.

Explaining the incident to correspondents, the World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director, Catherine Bertini, said the aircraft concerned was Russian and had been leased by the WFP. The contract ended on 24 June, and the aircraft was to have returned to Moscow for repairs and re-assignment. However, with no authorization from WFP, those operating the plane took upon themselves to transport another shipment. "This was unfortunate, particularly because we had not painted over the sign that said 'UN-WFP', and therefore there have been some allegations that we were involved in this other shipment", she said.

The WFP had notified the proper authorities as soon as the plane was in the air, she said.

* * *

The Government of South Africa has welcomed a proposal by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to send a United Nations Goodwill mission to the country to consult with all relevant parties, organizations and experts on a resumption of the talks on a democratic and non-racial South Africa. The mission would be led by Cyrus Vance, former Secretary of State of the United States. A United Nations spokesman cautioned today that the proposal had not yet been officially confirmed.

In his letter to the Secretary-General, dated 8 July, the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pik Botha, said his Government considered it of the "utmost importance" that the negotiations resume as soon as possible. He urged the leaders of the major parties in South Africa jointly to accept responsibility for further steps to curb violence.

The letter stressed that the mission must report on all aspects of the situation to the Secretary-General so that he would be able to inform the Security Council on the "factual situation". The Council would "not be in a position to conduct a balanced debate on the situation in South Africa unless it has all the facts and points of view before it", it said.

(more)

Council President José Luis Jesus of Cape Verde said on Tuesday that the Council would hold a formal meeting on the situation in South Africa on Wednesday, 15 July. He said seven to nine African foreign ministers were expected to participate in the debate.

In a press briefing today, Chairman of the Special Committee Against Apartheid, Ibrahim Garbari, said the Committee had not received any "official confirmation" of the dispatch of Cyrus Vance or any other person to South Africa. He confirmed however that Nelson Mandela, President of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), and Clarence Makwetu, President of the Pan Africanist Congress would attend the Security Council meeting on 15 July.
S/24255

* * *

Lord Carrington, Chairman of the European Conference on Yugoslavia, told correspondents today, after he had briefed the Security Council on his visit to Sarajevo and on the situation in the region, that he had proposed to send letters to the leaders of the three parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina urging them to restart the negotiations in London in the near future.

In reply to questions about the sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro, Lord Carrington said they were "having some effect". Serbian President Milosevic had told him that Serbian groups who had refused to hold talks three weeks ago were now prepared to talk about a settlement. Lord Carrington suggested that that might have "something to do with the sanctions" and noted that "sanctions take rather longer to work than everyone expects and sometime they do not work at all".

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said yesterday that he hoped the Economic and Social Council would become as active and important an organ as the Security Council and that it would become the Council of the twenty-first century. Addressing the final meeting of the Council's high-level segment, he stressed the importance of Agenda 21, the programme of action adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro last month, calling it the cornerstone of international cooperation.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali also said that it would be wrong to view economic and social development in isolation from peace and security. They were inextricably linked; there could not be economic and social development without peace and security just as there could not be peace and security without economic and social peace. It was imperative that the gap between the rich and the poor countries be bridged. There was also a need for the United Nations to bring pressure to bear on "certain points" such as satisfactory access to finance by developing countries; debt relief; and redirection of military expenditure to productive activities.

(more)

The Council today began the coordination segment of its session, with attention focused on the coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies, organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, as they relate to economic and social objectives.

* * *

Plans for an updated appeal for the Horn of Africa, covering the food and non-food relief needs for some 23 million people in the region are under way. The announcement was made yesterday by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Eliasson.

The revised appeal will include the outstanding requirements of Ethiopia, including Eritrea, the Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti and Kenya for the next six months. Although a special appeal was launched for Kenya last month, Mr. Eliasson stressed that it covered only the most pressing needs of the most vulnerable drought-affected Kenyans and refugees.

An earlier appeal for the Horn of Africa, issued on 1 February, requesting some $621 million from the international donor community has fallen short of its target by over $100 million.

In southern Africa, the World Food Programme (WFP) is stepping up its relief efforts, according to the new Executive Director of the WFP, Catherine Bertini. She told reporters at a press briefing today that some 18 million people were potentially affected by the drought, described as the worst in living memory in the region, and that it was critically important that the required quantities of food aid be successfully distributed to those in need.

Of the 1,645,000 tons needed for "targeted food aid" for the poor who have no other means of acquiring food, 66 percent had been pledged, she said. Of the 2,540,000 tons of "programme food aid", for the marketplace for those with the money to pay for food, only 34 percent had been pledged by donor governments so far.

The operation was costing $316 million, half as much as WFP's entire emergency budget for last year, and was the largest food aid delivery ever handled by the WFP.

* *** *